

Transforming Space and Place: The Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force – A 20-Year Retrospective

**Center for the Prevention of
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bridge Project • Methodology 	
Historical Context	5
Formation	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Summit activity • Core Values and Beliefs • First Wave Activities 	
Leadership	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phyllis Barkhurst Leadership Contributions • Michele Roland-Schwartz Leadership Contributions 	
Task Force Structure, Process and Culture	13
Task Force Function	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convener and Systems Change • Promoting Prevention Best Practice • Centering Survivors and Anti-Oppression 	
Task Force Impact	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statewide Systems Change and Alignment • Legislation and Policy • Attitudes and Beliefs • Education and Training 	
Next Step Priorities	26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing Systems Engagement, Alignment and Training • More Deeply Embedded and Comprehensive Pre-K through 12 Abuse Prevention, Education, and Child-Centered Systems • Broader Public Engagement • Ongoing Primary Prevention Advocacy and Connections Between IPV, Sexual Violence, and Child Abuse and Neglect • Ongoing and Enhanced Anti-Oppression, Equity, and Anti-Racism Advocacy 	
Conclusion	32
Appendix	34

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes key findings of the [Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force](#) (SATF) 20-Year Retrospective Project, an effort to document the history and impact of the Task Force since its formative Summit in 1999. The SATF is a non-profit statewide agency whose mission is to "facilitate and support a collaborative, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual abuse, harassment, and violence in Oregon."¹ SATF membership carries out this mission by promoting primary prevention, providing training and technical assistance to Oregon statewide and national responders, and coordinating over 150 multi-disciplinary members who compose the Task Force Advisory Committee and multiple subcommittees ranging from Advocacy Response to Medical Forensics and Legislative and Public Policy advocacy. The SATF organizational structure is shown in Appendix A.

The Bridge Project

The SATF 20-Year Retrospective occurred within the context of the Bridge Project, funded by The Ford Family Foundation and described by the Task Force in this way:

The Bridge Project was created by the SATF with the aim to connect the primary prevention goals of child abuse prevention with other types of violence prevention (e.g., intimate partner violence, sexual violence) across Oregon. The Bridge Project is working to support coordinated and effective abuse prevention programming for Oregonians across their lifespans. The Bridge Project team believes that "preventing violence and abuse across the lifespan requires collaboration, coordination, and cross-sector support."² Strategic efforts to link prevention programs can reduce siloing and inefficient use of resources. The Bridge Project brings multiple abuse and violence prevention efforts in Oregon together in order to work in concert as a collective group with shared goals.

Methodology

This review was conducted by the [Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect](#)³ at the University of Oregon. Data collection included key informant interviews and thorough reviews of SATF training offerings, primary prevention programming, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program, and a multitude of Oregon legislative achievements. Twenty-seven key informants were interviewed via phone, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams between June 2020 and October 2020. Interview participants were nominated primarily by SATF Executive Director Michele Roland-Schwartz and Founding Executive Director Phyllis Barkhurst. Additionally, interviewees were asked to identify anyone they believed may be well positioned to respond to interview questions. Interviews ranged between 14 minutes and 1 hour and 26 minutes, with an average completion time of 49 minutes. Phyllis Barkhurst was interviewed twice.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for their time and participation in these interviews (listed alphabetically by last name): Kristy Alberty, Phyllis Barkhurst, Steve Bellshaw, BB Beltran, Nicole Broder, Nicole Cunningham, Krista Evans, Meg Foster, Brie Franklin Akins, Erin Greenawald, Nancy Greenman, Sybil Hebb, Heather Huhtanen, Erin Kevin, Renee Kim, Megan Kovacs, Kim Larson, Warren Light, Lisa Norton, Cheryl O'Neill, Mel Phillips, May Pomegran-

¹ oregonsatf.org/about

² oregonsatf.org/abuse-prevention-across-the-lifespan

ate, Michele Roland-Schwartz, Sarah Sabri, Cynthia Stinson, Nadia Telsey, and Elaine Walters. This list of key informants, their roles, and years of involvement with the Task Force is included in Appendix B. Key informant interviews included the following questions, with additional time allotted for questions 5 and 7, given their complexity:

1. What is/was your involvement and role with the Task Force (TF)? What work did you do? What are you most proud about/feel best about in your TF work? (Note: for those on Legislative & Public Policy Committee [LPPC], ask about major legislative accomplishments)
2. Key challenges you and the TF face/faced in achieving TF aims?
3. Key lessons learned in your work with the TF? Surprises?
4. This next question was designed to be a bit more personal than what we've talked about so far; please feel free to share as much or as little as you feel comfortable. What are/were all of your motivations for participation?
5. What difference has the TF made? Who has benefited? How have attitudes and behaviors changed? Do you have anyone who has benefited from the TF that you would recommend that we speak with?
6. Please describe a task force memory - something that occurred that was meaningful and/or influential for you.
7. What is left undone? Next frontier, i.e. most important key next steps in abuse prevention. What is/are the most important thing(s) to achieve in the next 20 years?

Key informants who were involved in the first 5-7 years of the Task Force were asked three additional questions:

1. Describe the historical context at the time of the formation of the TF.
2. How have the aims of the TF changed over time?
3. Which groups/entities were the most vital early partnerships? In the formative years, what was the relationship between the TF and regional, national, and international efforts?

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in preparation for thematic analysis. Six analysis team members carefully reviewed the interview transcripts and identified a coding structure. Several topics and ideas came up consistently across the interviews, which led to the identification of the following themes:

- Historical context
- Task Force formation
- Leadership
- Task Force structure, process and culture
- Task Force function
- Task Force impact
- Next step priorities

³ The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN) is a pro-prevention research and outreach unit at the University of Oregon. CPAN includes the 90by30 Initiative, a community-campus partnership dedicated to child abuse prevention in Lane County, Oregon. This report was funded by The Ford Family Foundation in partnership with the SATF.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT⁴

*Early on we had to constantly say “domestic violence and sexual violence.”
Sexual violence was just not a part of the equation. – Nadia Telsey*

What were the prevailing attitudes, policies, and practices in the years immediately preceding the Task Force’s formation? What did Oregon’s early advocates encounter as they elevated sexual violence as a public health, social justice, and human rights issue? At that time, intimate partner violence (IPV, domestic violence) had gained significant traction – an Oregon-wide coalition was actively influencing policy and public attitudes, shelters and crisis lines were available in many regions, and national efforts bolstered local initiatives. While IPV captured vital attention, sexual violence remained marginalized; predominant sexual assault attitudes and policies centered on stranger rape, and the “marital rape exemption” had only recently been rescinded in Oregon. Oregonians who sexually assaulted their married partner (acquaintance rape) were very rarely prosecuted. As described by Cynthia Stinson:

Sexual assault was the sneaker wave of violence in intimate partner relationships – it does so much damage, but it received less focus because it wasn’t perceived as acute enough in IPV.

The dismissal and minimization of sexual violence was pervasive across and within systems, including Legal Aid. Sybil Hebb, employed at that time with the Law Center in a support role to lawyers prosecuting IPV, shared: “Frankly, we had not identified as an organization that survivors of sexual assault also had several legal needs – which now sounds ludicrous. But, for a variety of reasons, the Legal Aid landscape had not yet come to know that. Our institutional brain was relegated to think that sexual violence is (exclusively) a criminal issue and we didn’t have experience there; it’s wasn’t our bailiwick. I don’t think anyone meant to deny people service, but that is what happened. The need (in civil law) was not recognized.”

At that time no group was charged with training attorneys, law enforcement, or any segment of the criminal justice system around sexual violence response best practice.

Advocates faced strong pushback, antagonism, and the “rape culture” frame was, as described by Megan Kovacs, controversial: “It was contentious to say that rape culture exists and that we live in a community that perpetuates rape culture. The idea that oppression was a root cause of sexual violence was super controversial.” Advocates often were themselves dismissed. Nadia Telsey, involved with the Task Force during its formation, stated: “We were marginalized and seen as way out ‘man-haters.’ If you mentioned rape, you were seen as a troublemaker lacking credibility.”

If you were to walk into a Legal Aid office at that time and say that you had been sexually assaulted and family law issues weren’t involved, there wasn’t a housing issue, etc., I don’t know that there would have even been a slot in our intake form for that kind of concern. I don’t think that we had even identified it at that time.

– Sybil Hebb

⁴ This is not an exhaustive historical review. It is designed to provide a glimpse of the climate at the time of the Task Force’s formation.



At that time, additionally, there were no concerted sexual assault primary prevention efforts, zero sexual assault-specific primary prevention dollars, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) trainings and systems were unknown in Oregon, and systematic campus-based sexual violence response systems did not exist on any Oregon campus. Campus advocacy at that time was consistently dismissed by university administrators. Phyllis Barkhurst, Task Force Co-Founder and first Executive Director, recalled: "There was a culture that if you addressed sexual assault intervention or prevention, you were admitting that it was a problem on your campus. Administrators believed that if you admit it, parents wouldn't send their kids. The University of Oregon (for example) had people within its organization who wanted to take this on in a big way, though they met substantial barriers by administration."

TASK FORCE FORMATION

In the contours of that context, Phyllis Barkhurst – at the time Director of Eugene-based Sexual Assault Support Services – sought out avenues to elevate sexual assault awareness, primary prevention, and statewide systems change. She reflected: “There was a shared frustration with how non-stranger sexual assault cases were being handled across the board. And so, we were putting a voice to things that we knew were happening around the state. We were looking for an avenue or a champion.”

The “Summit” was born of this need. Set in Central Oregon in 1999, Phyllis and colleagues organized a 2-day event designed to shine a light on sexual assault and systems response in Oregon. The Summit, she said, was “strategic”: “We needed a champion. We didn’t have the power.” Hardy Myers, Oregon’s Attorney General, and several of his senior deputies attended. As described by Phyllis:

Hardy and his deputies sat there for two days while county after county discussed the issues in their community; 30 or 31 Oregon counties participated. We invited spokespersons from each county representing many sectors; sometimes a prosecutor, sometimes a nurse, sometimes an advocate. They each discussed how they felt their county’s law enforcement and prosecution were doing in responding to sexual assault survivors. At that time there was almost no non-stranger sexual assault cases being prosecuted in Oregon. If the victim knew the perpetrator, it wasn’t prosecuted (this point was made repeatedly during the Summit). Prosecutors at the Summit would say, “I’m sorry, we only prosecute stranger cases.”

Hardy, Phyllis recalled, was absorbed in the conversation: “It was at that time I realized Hardy was authentic. He was taking in everything being said. He was so respectful. Later, we walked together. I asked him what he thought... He said, ‘We’ve got to do this. We’ve got to take this on.’ I had no idea. It was a grand slam.”

The whole purpose of the Summit was to convince Hardy that we needed to take this statewide. We weren’t sure if it would be a bust or a success.

– Phyllis Barkhurst

The Summit sharpened the need to center action around sexual assault policy, practice, and statewide primary prevention. For Phyllis, the fact that county delegations paid for all staff costs – hotel, travel, meals – was “the first indication we were on the right track; there was a groundswell of readiness.”

POST-SUMMIT ACTIVITY

An organizing committee met following the Summit. Shortly thereafter, the Task Force formed as a special project of the Attorney General’s office. In July of 2001 Phyllis Barkhurst was appointed as the first Oregon Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Task Force Department of Justice employee: “I was part time and the only staff... I first hired interns until I had enough money for an additional half-time position, and then later enough for me to go full time – and grow and grow and grow.” The newly established Task Force met every six weeks for many years in order to foster “exponential growth and county participation... including consistently 33 of Oregon’s 36 counties.”

Core Values and Beliefs

The first conversations we had about the Task Force were about wanting to make sure survivor voices were very clearly front and center.

– Phyllis Barkhurst

Task Force participants established core values and beliefs – centering survivors, ensuring a welcoming environment, and grounding the work in an anti-oppression framework. Phyllis recalled: “We worked to make the Task Force a welcoming place so that new people quickly felt heard and included as a part of decision making. And, In the very fabric of the Task Force formation was seeing sexual violence as a social justice issue. This attracted a lot of like-minded people who agreed that taking on sexual violence is also taking on oppression.”

Nancy Greenman, an early and long-time Task Force leader, summarized the relationship between anti-oppression and prevention: “If we look through an equity lens that is informed by a deep understanding of oppression, we can find our way to solutions that work for everyone.” Nadia Telsey recalled a rationale for rooting the Task Force in primary prevention and anti-oppression activism: “As you pile on oppression, you pile on vulnerabilities, lack of accessibility, and a lack of credibility, all of which make someone more susceptible to assault.”

The Task Force, under Phyllis’s guidance, looked at what sexual assault does, how it functions in society, how it works with oppression, and its relationship to intersectionality.

– Nadia Telsey

First Wave Activities

The Task Force moved quickly, establishing its organizational structure, policies, and procedures and rapidly launched programming. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program started during the Task Force’s first year, and Oregon established its national footprint as an innovator and training leader. Regarding SANE’s launch, Phyllis recalled: “Nurses were saying, ‘We’re here. We want this now. We can’t wait any longer.’” It was a challenge (to move that quickly). It was about readiness; people were eager. Early on, we brought in national consultants and hosted the national conference in Portland.”

The SANE body of work and thoughtfulness built into the 40-hour training was unique to Oregon. It exceeded all national standards. The heart, collaboration, and structure of it was astounding. It was beautiful. People were so bonded and moved.

– Elaine Walters

Early activities also included shifting expectations for prevention funding priorities, educating multiple sectors about *primary* prevention, and engagement with legislators. During this period, Brie Franklin Akins was hired as the first Prevention Coordinator and Nancy Greenman and Warren Light Co-Chaired the Prevention and Education Subcommittee where emphasis was placed on moving from a primarily punitive response to centering anti-oppression advocacy and the public health model.

Early efforts centered on engagement with legislators, education, explaining victim impact, system response, and prevention. As described by Sybil Hebb: “We started to build a presence in the capital; if a legislative issue related to domestic violence and sexual assault emerged, eventually legislators would think to call us. We were getting in the mix; helping legislators understand that we have opinions and voices Over time, we were perceived as experts with a valid opinion.”



Sybil also outlined her own evolution – and the role of the Task Force: “In doing legal work, I was becoming aware that the Task Force was making these points, which were slowly finding their way into my consciousness and the consciousness of others. Later, I started doing legislative work for the Law Center. The Task Force had a presence there; we began collaborating on several of their bills. So, I was in conversation with Phyllis and Heather Huhtanen about needs and structural change. It was a transition – we began to realize that sexual assault was compelling, an important issue for our clients.”

We were sort of learning on the fly, and eventually it became clear that we shared a common goal of helping legislators understand that this is not a partisan issue; this is a public health issue. We worked hard to move sexual assault from its perception as a purely public safety issue – from “Am I only safe on the streets” to “Are kids safe in their homes?”

– Sybil Hebb

Additionally, in the formative years, concentrated attention was given to recasting prevention and generating and redirecting funding streams. Brie Franklin Akins recalled that of the few dollars that were dedicated to ‘prevention,’ most went to secondary and tertiary efforts and administrative costs. Phyllis prioritized funding shifts: “It took us over four years, bringing together people like Kate Brown, Kitty Piercy and other high players, to force decision makers to release rape prevention and education dollars to programs who were doing the work.”

One of the first goals was to use our political mind, with Hardy at the forefront, to get that money to the Task Force.

– Phyllis Barkhurst

TASK FORCE LEADERSHIP

The individuals interviewed for this report overwhelmingly agreed that Task Force leadership, with emphasis on Phyllis Barkhurst, Hardy Myers, and Michele Roland-Schwartz, has been instrumental in the Task Force's formation and ongoing success. Certainly, the Task Force has additionally benefited from countless advocates and individuals across multiple sectors, all in their own right leaders in this work. For the purposes of this report, participants highlighted formal Task Force-specific roles and, in particular, the two longest-serving Executive Directors (Phyllis, Michele).

Phyllis also acknowledged the vital contributions of many individuals during the early stages of the Task Force: "We weren't the only ones. Advocates knew we were failing sexual assault victims. We moved very quickly. We had a lot of momentum; momentum because the readiness was there. People were hungry for change."

Michele commented with gratitude on the legacy of former directors:

I am reminded, on a regular basis, of the major investments in Oregon given by directors before me. Gifts they left behind that current staff and partners get to grow and carry forward. For instance, we wouldn't have a Sexual Abuse Protective Order in Oregon if it were not for Christine Herrman and Cynthia Stinson. Phyllis and Heather put the idea out there. Christine laid the technical groundwork, and Cynthia took it to the finish line. It's humbling to be part of that history and I feel a great sense of responsibility to carry it forward.

Participants frequently referred to Phyllis and Hardy's synergy. Heather Huhtanen pointed to their combined unique skill set: "You always have a coalition, and you always have systems people, but there isn't very often the thing that sits between. That was their absolute brilliance, recognizing the utility of both." Elaine Walters recalled: "You wanted to be part of the Attorney General's Sexual Task Force. It wasn't just because it was the Attorney General – it was because it was that Attorney General. And Phyllis had a lot of charisma around this issue. She could see systems really well – their minds formed an exceptional partnership, including Task Force structure."

Phyllis also emphasized Hardy's pivotal role and the crucial role of leadership in their groundbreaking advocacy: "Hardy was the right champion at the right time. Even with the groundswell of interest, without Hardy's influence and funding advocacy, we could not have moved forward. It was that combination; the groundswell – many sectors knew we were failing victims – and Hardy as champion." Renee Kim remembered Hardy in this way:

What I will say about Hardy is that he came to every Task Force meeting and went to almost every subcommittee meeting. He was extremely supportive in a way that you don't see very often from government leaders. He actually did the work. It modeled for others in upper government positions.

Phyllis Barkhurst Leadership Contributions

People interviewed as a part of this 20-year retrospective frequently described Phyllis as brilliant, bold, and visionary. Elaine Walters referenced Phyllis's skill in forming effective teams: "Phyllis was a master at identifying and bringing talent together. The caliber of people that she was interested in working and surrounding herself with was amazing. Not just in their intelligence, but also in the way we fit together. She was a great matchmaker; she did that with our staff and with the Task Force. She thought strategically about the Task Force, but I don't think she was less strategic about the staff."

Regarding Phyllis's ability to collaborate with skilled and effective leaders:

Phyllis and Heather Huhtanen were just so brilliant and on the cutting edge; they had their fingers in the mix of everything, including conversations about best practices – and chased them down.

– Cynthia Stinson

And Sybil Hebb referenced Phyllis's tenacity and shared Task Force advocacy:

Phyllis, Heather Huhtanen and Renee Kim were brilliant. Once they got space, they shared their expertise and built credibility. They were there (at legislative sessions) all the time – dogging it, in the hallways, everywhere. Eventually, the conversation did change.

Michele Roland-Schwartz Leadership Contributions

In the context of asking interviewees about current Task Force strengths, participants overwhelmingly highlighted Michele. She was described as wonderful, amazing, bright, affirming, survivor-centered, and someone who deeply understands and continues to champion anti-oppression and intersectionality. Nicole Broder referred to Michele's stabilizing influence and empowering leadership style:

We're stable, well-developed, and have the most supportive Executive Director and board that you could ask for. Under Michele's leadership, we are a model and example for the country . . . Under her leadership I feel like we get to work to our full potential.

– Nicole Broder

Lisa Norton nodded to Michele's strategic thinking around Task Force development and partnerships: "Michele is intentional about who she brings into the Task Force. It seems we keep hitting the jackpot every time we hire someone. I think that speaks to her leadership and the way she has nurtured our culture and grown the organization." Warren Light, a long-time Task Force member, referenced Michele's ability to foster meaningful conversation:

When Michele came on some of those conversations were in a very dry place; we needed somebody who was a healing presence. Due to Michele's leadership, people are more open to share their points of view. There's a creative tension in this work; you have to have openness to these conversations. Michele's presence has helped generate those conversations. She's just been just amazing. I hope she continues this work for a long time.

Kristy Alberty also commented on Michele's empowering leadership style: "I really appreciate being at a place that says, 'If this is a passion that you have, I'm going to give you the resources that you need to do this.'"

Of Michele's leadership, Nancy Greenman said, "Michele puts community before a personal agenda. There's the short term, there's the long term, and you have to weigh this all the time. I think she's done a great job of weighing it and keeping people at the table.



TASK FORCE LEADERSHIP (FIG. 1)

Phyllis Barkhurst	Co-Founder, 2001
Hardy Myers	Co-Founder, 2001
Phyllis Barkhurst	Executive Director, 2001-2007
Christine Herrman	Executive Director, 2007-2012
Cynthia Stinson	Interim Executive Director, Jan 2013-Aug 2013
Michele Roland-Schwartz	Executive Director, Aug 2013-present

TASK FORCE STRUCTURE, PROCESS, and CULTURE

In hindsight, with people getting together every six weeks, we had the opportunity to take on a tremendous amount of policy work. It was an amazing opportunity to take on all sorts of ancillary issues. Change happened much quicker than I had ever seen at that time – and since, actually. – Phyllis Barkhurst

The Task Force was designed as 50 members appointed by the Attorney General across multiple sectors and composed of committees and active subcommittees (see Appendix A). Elaine Walters described the Task Force early-days structure, process, and staff support in this way:

It was no joke. People were deeply engaged in the work. And that had everything to do with the staff support and guidance that was available to those groups. As you know, committees can come together for many years and not do a lot of work. The structure, intention, staffing and intentional focus on relationships was the basis for everything that was happening.

Heather Huhtanen also reflected the views of many, emphasizing a vital role for the committees, subcommittees, and meeting structure:

Our every six weeks meetings, committees and subcommittees... I realize now it was just our vehicle, the mechanism to move change forward. This exceptional vehicle improved understanding, awareness, attitudes, values, and practices. I saw people have absolute changes in how they thought about these topics – moving to and fully endorsing a much more open, innovative approach to sexual violence prevention. The process drove change. I don't think we really appreciated that at the time.

Additionally, Task Force committee appointments evolved over time, responding to emerging needs. As described by Steve Bellshaw:

I talked with Hardy off and on for probably three years – and Phyllis was in that conversation. Finally, right before he left he said, "That's going to be my parting gift." With that, he created the Attorney General's Domestic Violence Resource Prosecutor position, currently filled by Sarah Sabri. That was huge... (and led to) a much closer relationship between domestic violence and sexual assault. It's not such a rift between DV programs and sexual assault programs – those attitudes have changed a lot over the years.

Task Force Culture

Making space for process is important. It's relationship building. I really appreciate that we center the voices of the people doing the work in communities in all that we do.

– Meg Foster



Participants repeatedly described current Task Force culture as instrumental in its success. Krista Evans reflected the sentiment of many: "You can approach any one of the Task Force members and they will validate what you're feeling... and provide gracious, encouraging, clear and supportive feedback." Kim Larson credited Task Force climate with participant longevity: "They've created a culture that respects and allows for all opinions . . . the fact that partners continue to stay at the table for multiple years speaks to their ability to foster that culture."

Heather Huhtanen mapped the importance of Task Force climate to process and outcomes: "The goal is not the tangible thing at the end. The goal is the process. The whole point of the process is to think, expand, become more compassionate and caring; to be able to do better in our work, awareness, and in our communities." Others highlighted relationships as central, including Nicole Broder: "You have to lean into relationships; it isn't important, it's central."

The Task Force is a microcosm of all the good things that we want in a community. To be able to shift in a collective way . . . or pivot to make change for everyone. It happens at those tables
– Mel Phillips

I feel very grateful to be involved in what is not only an effective institution, but also these really inspiring and amazing people
– May Pomegranate

TASK FORCE FUNCTION

We are a systems change organization We work with and within systems.
– Meg Foster

What purpose or function has the Task Force served since its inception? What do Task Force leaders and contributors believe is its most vital purpose? How has this changed over time, if at all? The Task Force, certainly, has served multiple purposes – and the following areas surfaced among participants as the most instrumental: a) a statewide convener to promote systems change and alignment, b) prevention leadership, and c) to elevate survivors within an empowerment and anti-oppression framework.

Convener and Systems Change

Bringing people together for a common good is among the most important functions of the Task Force.
– Michele Roland-Schwartz

The Task Force was widely described as a “convener,” “platform for conversations that are not happening in other spaces,” and, as summarized by Erin Greenawald, a vehicle for vital collaboration: “I’d look into the audience and think, I need to contact that person... oh, and that person... an amazing resource for me every time.” Mel Phillips described the Task Force as an effective interdisciplinary and resource-rich network: “I love the Task Force because we know we can’t end what we want to end in a Petri dish... this community is able to use their networks. It’s a complete consolidation of energy; it gives me access to many diverse avenues and people in order to do the things that I do best.”

Many others indicated that the Task Force lends a kind of vitality to their work.

I feel reinvigorated (when meeting with the Task Force and attending trainings). I felt like we (our local efforts) were sinking back, losing ground. Then, when I meet with the Task Force I’m invigorated – toward our mission and finding unique ways to address other challenges.
– Krista Evans

The Task Force also provides a vehicle for addressing challenging issues, conflicting roles, and emerging trends. Sarah Sabri emphasized that the Task Force serves as a facilitator among sectors that, at least on the surface, may have conflicting roles:

It can sometimes be a challenge to navigate conflicting roles or perspectives – even when the overarching goal is the

same, which is to hold offenders accountable and to keep victims safe and to give them a voice. What it means to accomplish those goals from the perspective of a particular discipline – whether it is a prosecutor, law enforcement, advocate, or medical professional, for example – may be different. Similarly, the question of how to accomplish that – for example, is it treatment, incarceration, or being placed on a registry or a sex offender list – aren't always going to be the same. So, there are sometimes inherent struggles about how to approach a problem or respond to a particular practice.

The Task Force and its members create an incredible benefit in allowing for all the different disciplines to have these conversations with each other, even when it might be easier within a particular discipline to say, "Well, I'm not concerned about the advocacy piece of it right now. I'm concerned about the medical side of things. Or I'm concerned about the gathering of evidence, etc." In a way, the structure of the Task Force both allows for, and perhaps compels, that the conversation around how we accomplish goals and objectives includes a comprehensive approach so as to address concerns from various perspectives and representations.

The Task Force, including early in its formation and through its entire history, has provided an avenue for turning toward controversial and emerging issues. For example, Cynthia Stinson recalled a conversation with Phyllis around working with people who offend. Cynthia asked Phyllis: "Why do we want to work with those people? I don't want to talk about offenders. I want to talk about survivors."

As described by Cynthia, Phyllis responded: "Cynthia, they are in our communities. If you think we lock them up, throw them away, you're mistaken. We need to be in the conversation about what is and is not happening – the standards and how we're dealing with this."

In this regard, Phyllis herself said: "What creates somebody who commits these acts? A lot of people plugged their nose at that part of the work and found it offensive to have people working in the offender field as part of the Task Force. This has changed so that many people wonder why anybody would be against that. So that's been a huge shift."

Promoting Prevention Best Practice

The Task Force championed *primary* prevention and systems-level change – and continues to do so today. This has included advocating for upstream strategies, education, and anti-oppression work *alongside* systems response change. As described by Heather Huhtanen, systems response change and primary prevention advocacy were original central Task Force functions:

We were working to improve systems response to sexual violence...In that niche (response reform), I believe we made real improvements in how people thought about and approached sexual violence so that when they did meet survivors entering the system, the response was vastly improved.

While the Task Force worked to recast sexual violence prevention as upstream norms change, they also established their position as promoting innovative and best practice response and prevention training.

This has included, for example, leadership around SANE trainings, the Sexual Assault Training Institute, and a more recent launch of a very well-received primary prevention training series and the Prevention Toolkit (at right).

The Task Force also works to foster and lead the expansion and integration of multiple forms of violence prevention – “connecting the dots,” as described by Meg Foster:

My predecessors started this work around connecting the dots between sexual health promotion and sexual violence prevention and we carry that on. We hosted a statewide summit – which led to a 2016 collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education to update the health education standards and performance indicators. That’s where a lot of the child abuse prevention connections emerged; three years ago was the first time someone from the child abuse prevention sector served on the prevention committee. This shift is happening.



Many others indicated that the Task Force, due to its credibility and high quality and evidence-based programming, creates leverage in their own local work. BB Beltran put it this way:

From my perspective as a service provider, the Task Force has had an impact on our credibility. It’s useful to be able to refer to an agency with a lot of credibility – when I’m talking about best practices, it’s not coming from me only as an advocate, it is also coming from this Technical Assistance state agency that does a lot of research and outreach.

Centering Survivors and Anti-Oppression

I am most proud of the fact that the Task Force is so deeply rooted in prevention work that addresses oppression as the root cause of violence and abuse

– Mel Phillips

Since its inception, the Task Force has elevated survivor voices and advocated nesting prevention in an anti-oppression framework. These two efforts were overwhelmingly mentioned by participants as central Task Force functions. Task Force programming continuously works to embed survivor perspectives and strategies to dismantle oppression – and works to apply these values and beliefs in their own policies and practices.

Nicole Cunningham framed it this way: We’re having intentional and meaningful conversations within our staff about what it looks like to work through oppression and come into our work with an anti-oppression lens. What matters for me in those conversations is the honest and authentic way of being who we are, how we do the work, how we want to do the work, and why it matters.

Nicole Broder offered a similar sentiment:

Knowing that I am in a place where anti-oppression is not only recognized but actively supported is so meaningful;



something that really stands out. It's why I'm proud to work here and why I feel inspired to generate new programs and am ambitious with where we're going."

I love what the Task Force stands for – their values are embedded in their work; it's not an afterthought. It makes me proud to be an employee.

– Lisa Norton

TASK FORCE IMPACT

During this time of reflection – 20 years since the Task Force’s formation – what has changed? What difference have these concerted efforts made? Who has benefited, and how? Participants pointed to multiple impacts and positive outcomes, including vastly improved sexual assault response systems, sweeping legislative changes, and innovative and highly regarded prevention education. Many believed that the Task Force has fostered transformational change, from recasting primary prevention and prevention education to groundbreaking legal standards, such as campus advocate privilege, now adopted throughout the United States.

Four areas of impact, in particular, emerged as central: 1) statewide systems change and alignment, 2) legislation and policy, 3) attitudes and beliefs, and 4) prevention education and training. Participants also overwhelmingly agreed that these areas of impact have directly benefited each of the following groups, in descending order: 1) survivors of sexual assault, 2) response systems and systems-based providers, and 3) the public at large.

Statewide Systems Change and Alignment

It’s incredible. I don’t think that you will see an organization that has literally changed the way multiple systems rooted deeply in entrenched racism, white supremacy and sexism so effectively moved those systems and made them significantly better.

– Megan Kovacs

Elaine Walters, who was involved with the Task Force in its early days, described her observations of systems-level changes over time:

It went from a tiny group of champion law enforcement folks to a wide-ranging influence across the state – and occurred in every discipline that participated. And, the nature of the collaborations between those disciplines really was cemented. I don’t think anybody pretends anymore that there isn’t a need and a set of standards to meet among advocates, healthcare providers, law enforcement, the justice system and others. Because of the status of the effort and the status of Task Force members, there were people from all over the state clamoring to be part of it. It changed the norm across the state in a significant way, from being siloed – law enforcement, nurses, social workers, and advocates – to intentionally focusing on those relationships across Oregon.

These collaborations have translated to very specific and meaningful improvements for survivors as they navigate systems in the immediate aftermath of their assault, even at the granular level of transportation. As described by Sarah Sabri: “The Task Force has done amazing work to develop best practices for required transportation protocols between hospitals for sexual assault examinations to provide for better services to victims and survivors.”

They have their finger on the pulse of who is providing services, so they can connect people to that resource, whether they’re systems folks, advocates or community members.

They have a huge reach.

– Renee Kim

Participants pointed to many additional direct benefits for survivors due to statewide systems change and alignment efforts, including on Oregon college and university campuses. Cheryl O'Neill described her view of this area of the Task Force's impact: "Night and day. Students had ended their college careers because they just couldn't be on campus – and there was no one to talk to. The fact that now there are privileged advocates on Oregon campuses is huge – this is directly attributable to the Task Force."

The Task Force has significantly changed what happens on college campuses. Previously, there wasn't even information about campus reporting. Now there's a whole website, staffing, and full policies and protocols. So that's pretty incredible.

– BB Beltran

Legislation and Policy

Changes in legislation, policy and practice were enthusiastically heralded by participants – many described their involvement in this area of the Task Force's work as "life changing," "deeply personally meaningful," and Elaine Walters reflected the sentiment of many: "I feel really honored to have been part of that body of work." BB Beltran emphasized the relationship between legislative changes and their direct impact on survivors: "There have been so many victories. We're directly impacting survivors every day, not just in this nebulous way; we're making a better system."

Participants pointed to multiple and impactful legal and policy changes directly attributable to Task Force advocacy (outlined in Legislative Milestones, Figure 3). This includes, for instance, the sexual assault protection order, housing protections, the Healthy Teen Relationship Act, youth legal rights for their own medical decision making, SAFE Kit legislation, personal representation, and advocate privilege. The personal representative law, allowing sexual assault victims to have a chosen representative (such as an advocate or family member) during interviews took three legislative sessions of persistent advocacy to pass (six years), and garnered national attention as a groundbreaking victory for survivors.

Cheryl O'Neill reflected on her personal experience during the Advocate Privilege testimony process: "I sat through testimony in tears. It was so moving to hear what survivors were saying and to hear legislators respond. Survivors were being heard by individuals in positions of power. This directly relates to the impact of the Task Force... where people in positions of power listen to survivors."

Said Phyllis Barkhurst: We made policy changes that directly improved victims' medical experience in the immediate aftermath and extended the statute of limitations for many sexual assault offenses so that when ev-

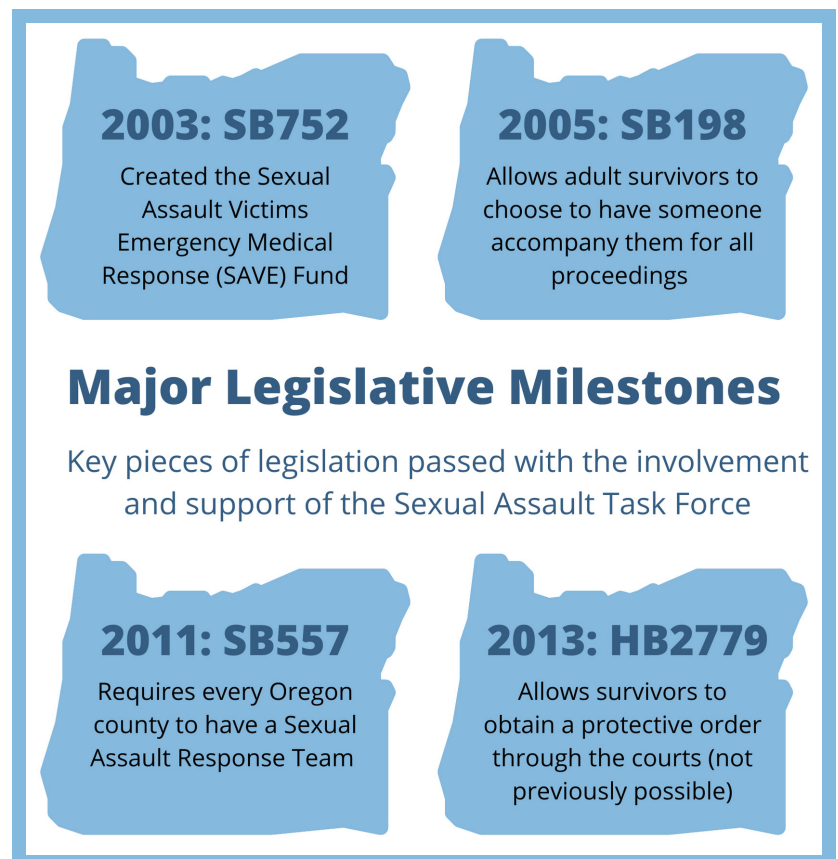


Fig. 2

idence became available prosecution could proceed.”

Many also suggested that these legislative advances, alongside the prevention and systems-level education and training, positively influenced law enforcement and prosecution practices.

As described by Kim Larson: “I think that law enforcement talks differently to survivors; law enforcement has taken a look at how they interview and interact with survivors. I would say this is the same for prosecution. The TF has been instrumental in shaping a huge shift in approach in those fields.”

SPOTLIGHT ON: HB3476 (2015)

Campus Privileged Communication | Providing National Leadership

House Bill 3476 was a coordinated effort by the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault community, including the Oregon Department of Justice, the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Oregon Law Center, the Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force, and the Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women, to address confidentiality and privilege for survivors. With HB3476, Oregon was the first in the U.S. to establish privileged communications for student survivors seeking support from advocates on Oregon campuses. As described by Michele Roland-Schwartz, “HB3476, along with efforts to bridge Title IX compliance with trauma-informed best practices, set into motion the robust campus program we see today.”

Michele Roland-Schwartz said: “In the first year of implementing HB3476, we saw a 138% increase in campus reporting and a 122% increase in access to student support services on Oregon campuses. The Campus Program has helped colleges and universities implement key federal and state sexual harassment and violence legislation on our campuses. Bridging compliance, advocacy and prevention initiatives with trauma-informed practices wouldn’t be possible without the leadership of Jackie Sandmeyer, Kate Hildebrandt, Carli Rohner, and Dr. Aislinn Addington - to name a few. We didn’t have a dedicated Campus Coordinator prior to 2014; now we have 2 FTE to support the three prongs of our campus program: compliance, advocacy, and prevention.”

OREGON SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE LEGISLATIVE MILESTONES 2001-2013



2003

The Sexual Assault Victims' Emergency Medical Response (SAVE) Fund and SANE Certification Committee are established

2007

Sex Offender Treatment Board (SOTB) established

2011

Every Oregon county is now required to have a multidisciplinary SART

2001

Then-Attorney General Hardy Myers established the Sexual Assault Task Force

2005

Adult survivors can now have someone accompany them through all proceedings.

2009

Mental Incapacitation focus shifted to whether someone is unable to consent and the defendant's knowledge

2013

Survivors can now obtain a sexual abuse protective order (SAPO) against their assaulter (*impossible prior*)

Since its creation in 2001, the Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF) has been involved with and supported over 20 bills introduced in the Oregon House and Senate.

Fig. 3

Attitudes and Beliefs

I'm seeing baseline knowledge and awareness creeping out further and further.

– Nicole Broder

Many attribute the Task Force and additional cultural forces to changing attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence and creating a 'new baseline' among a cross sector of providers. In that regard, Erin Greenawald remarked: "The newer generation of prosecutors, you don't have to persuade them. They come in with an understanding of what rape culture is and what consent is. Prior to this, you had to spend more time working with people on these basics. The baseline is much different."

Others identified a relationship between the Task Force's efforts to elevate the conversation about sexual violence and norms change. "The more time we spent with each other, the more you could sort of stretch the limits of this conversation," Heather Huhtanen said. Megan Kovacs put it this way:

It is now much more clear that taking advantage of someone is not OK – regardless. You don't get a pass if you manage to get someone drunk or find somebody drunk.

– Cheryl O'Neill

The Task Force has been instrumental in opening up and broadening the conversation; the idea that sexual violence prevention is possible and it's about empowering people to understand their own sexual health, to have bodily autonomy, to understand consent, and to understand that sexual violence prevention is about sexual health promotion.

Steve Bellshaw, among several others, also identified an increased awareness about male-identified sexual assault survivors: "We now have the men's engagement committee... and we have a better realization about men as victims."

Said Sarah Sabri: "The Task Force has made significant strides in influencing community conversations, the way information is presented to the public, and provides credibility to the information and best practice recommendations. This has significantly benefited victims, family members, teachers, counselors and others coming into contact with victims of sexual violence."

OREGON SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE LEGISLATIVE MILESTONES 2014-2021



2016

State Police now must address the backlog of untested SAFE Kits

2018

Best practice guidance to K-12 school districts for survivors of sexual assault

2020

Work done on SAPO improvements

2015

All universities in Oregon now have advocates, and advocate-client privilege created

2017

Hospitals now call a victim advocate for all sexual assault survivors

2019

Improvements to SOTB (renamed to the Sexual Offense Treatment Board), SAPO and SARTs

2021

Additional SAPO and SOTB improvements

Since its creation in 2001, the Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF) has been involved with and supported over 20 bills introduced in the Oregon House and Senate.

Education and Training

The work done on the Oregon Department of Education standards and benchmarks was fundamentally important because you can refer to it as you work to select and implement curriculum.

– Nancy Greenman

Participants described substantial impact due to the Task Force's prevention education and training leadership – and believe that this has impacted multiple systems and benefited survivors. BB Beltran, who has been involved with the Task Force at multiple levels for nearly its entire history, remarked that the Task Force has been instrumental in redefining primary prevention and made strides by broadly introducing primary prevention, i.e., "Prevention isn't a huge mystery anymore."

The Task Force education and training efforts have touched multiple sectors, reached many thousands of Oregonians, and have been lauded by national organizations as standards-setting. Training programming and resources have included, for example, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, the Sexual Assault Response Team Handbook, the Sexual Assault Training Institute, the Campus Climate Survey Toolkit, the Prevention Training Institute, the Prevention Toolkit, and more recently a 20-hour self-guided training targeting anti-racism titled *Addressing the Root Causes of Violence and Abuse*.

Erin Greenawald, directly involved as a trainer, reflected on the impact of the Training Institute: "The Task Force's ability to provide trainings across the state has been so impactful. The trainings have been delivered to law enforcement and prosecutors, tailored specifically for Oregon, and responsive. The ability and willingness of the Task Force Program Coordinators to work with and listen to us (instructors) has been really, really important in creating an effective curriculum."

Many others spoke about the quality of Task Force trainings, staff commitment, and survivor impact. As described by Kristy Alberty: "Not only do we have fantastic and very dedicated staff, we have allies and trainers who are committed and that really shines in the trainings. People who attend our trainings remark that our trainers are so dedicated and inspiring." And, Task Force trainings have benefited residents across the United States. As described by Steve Bellshaw: "I have been part of the Task Force since 2003. I'm most proud that we've done trainings not only across the state, but across the country. Our outreach to officers and investigators about the importance of their investigations, listening, victim interviewing techniques, and the trauma informed aspect of it, have now reached thousands of police officers across the country. That's a big accomplishment."

In 2018 we launched comprehensive prevention training and intentionally opened it to anyone engaging in prevention. We've had representatives from campus efforts, child abuse prevention, sexual health, domestic violence, batterer intervention, culturally specific groups, tribal community members, elder abuse and more. We weren't sure how it would go. It went so well. It has grown from there.

– Meg Foster

EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT



Prevention Toolkit

Designed for anyone in Oregon interested in violence prevention, the Prevention Toolkit aims to support effective, collaborative efforts that address violence and abuse prevention across the lifespan. The Toolkit merges public health theory, best practices, and suggestions from state and national partners.

oregonsatf.org/satf-comprehensive-prevention-toolkit/



SANE Program

The SANE Program offers technical assistance, support, and information on best standards of care to SANE/SAEs, clinics, and hospitals statewide. The Task Force regularly provides a 40-hour adult/adolescent basic SANE/SAE training and advanced training including mock exams, expert witness training, and other in-person and virtual training on a variety of topics. SATF staff administer the Oregon SAE/SANE Certification Commission and provide guidance to SANE/SAEs applying for certification and recertification.

oregonsatf.org/programs/sane-program/



Campus Climate Survey Toolkit

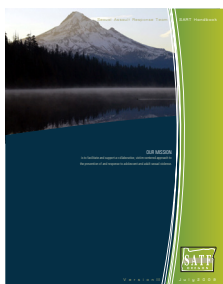
Campus climate surveys are a powerful tool to help inform prevention strategies that create healthy & safe campus communities, free of violence. This toolkit has been designed to be both a resource and a guide for colleges and universities in Oregon. Informed by professionals across the state, the goal of this toolkit is to establish campus climate surveys that move beyond compliance to creating best practice through creating mechanisms to improve both evaluation and prevention programming on campuses.



Sexual Assault Training Institute (SATI)

The SATI provides ongoing, high-quality, professional training designed to increase knowledge, skills, and sensitivity to survivors. Both discipline-specific and multidisciplinary trainings are offered for advocates, campus practitioners, law enforcement, prosecutors, SANEs, sexual assault response teams (SARTs), and prevention staff.

oregonsatf.org/programs/sexual-assault-training-institute/



SART Technical Assistance and Training

SATF offers technical assistance, training, and guidance for SARTs across the state, including support with protocol development, goal setting, establishing benchmarks and tracking trends, developing a community presence, seeking peer support from other SARTs, and more. SART Development & Sustainability Workshops are available through SATI for communities who want to develop and/or strengthen their SART efforts.

oregonsatf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/SART-Handbook-FINAL-July-09.pdf

EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT (Cont'd)



Dismantling White Supremacy Culture and Anti-Oppression Trainings

In partnership with the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (OCADSV), SATF co-hosts the Dismantling White Supremacy Culture In and as a Part of Prevention workshop series. This two-day workshop encourages attendees, aimed at those with privilege who benefit from racism, to consider the impact of white supremacy culture on their prevention work and the extent to which our organizations engage in/disrupt white supremacy culture. Attendees build skills for dismantling white supremacy culture and identify primary prevention strategies that actively work toward transforming structures that uphold white supremacy culture across Oregon communities.

One of SATF's newest releases, Addressing the Root Causes of Violence and Abuse is a 20-hour self-paced online anti-oppression course designed for anyone interested in responding to and/or preventing any form of violence or abuse across the lifespan. The training provides attendees with resources, strategies, and skills from leaders around the world, including activists, artists, allies, and change-agents.

oregonsatf.org/training/addressing-the-root-causes-of-violence-and-abuse-online/



Communities of Prevention: Collaborative Toolkit

This toolkit offers strategies to bridge broad prevention efforts and provides support for any community collaborative group working towards a healthier and safer community. Included are tangible strategies to implement, facilitate, and sustain local cross-discipline, cross-sector collaboratives. _

<http://oregonsatf.org/collaborative-toolkit/>

SPOTLIGHT ON: SURVIVOR EXPERIENCE

Because of the change spurred by the work of the Task Force, survivors of sexual assault are much more likely to:

- (In relative terms) have a pervasive sense that I am more likely to be believed.
- (In relative terms) have a pervasive sense that some accountability may occur if I disclose
- Have somebody with me all the way through the process – and anytime I want to talk to anybody about your sexual assault.
- Find somebody at my school who has had some education and information about sexual violence
- Find many more people willing to listen and not respond with victim blaming.
- Experience bigger, broader cultural receptivity to emerging shifts, like the Me Too Movement.
- Receive an exam from a well-trained and sensitive nurse and other health care providers
- Encounter attorneys and policymakers who believe that sexual assault happens inside of committed relationships
- Encounter law enforcement and college campus staff that will respond from a survivor-centered place
- Encounter people in many sectors who understand that prevention is effective.

NEXT STEP PRIORITIES

Participants were invited to imagine the Task Force's next 20 years, which generated rich recommendations and aspirations. Specifically, participants were asked What is left undone – what are the most important next steps in abuse prevention? To this, participants' responses fell along five specific categories:

1. Ongoing systems engagement, alignment and training
2. More deeply embedded and comprehensive pre-K through 12 abuse prevention education and child-centered systems
3. Broader public engagement
4. Ongoing primary prevention advocacy and connections between IPV, sexual violence, and child abuse and neglect.
5. Ongoing and enhanced anti-oppression, equity, and anti-racism advocacy

Ongoing Systems Engagement, Alignment and Training: Which Investments, For Whom?

Participants overwhelmingly urged ongoing **systems improvements**, alignment, and systems-specific training. Many, for example, endorsed continuous law enforcement training. One participant put it this way: "I think law enforcement training always has to be the priority of the Task Force. The bottom line – if victims don't trust law enforcement, they won't come forward. So, training law enforcement is an underlying ongoing need."

Others urged more overt and embedded anti-racism work as a standard for all systems-level training. As described by Heather Huhtanen:

There's a real utility in that middle place between advocacy, activism, and systems. The social justice and Black Lives Matter work, while sensitive for the criminal justice system, needs to be discussed and thoughtfully integrated into the work of the Task Force. I hope the Task Force is in a position to more explicitly talk about the context of this kind of violence and to link it to systems.

Brie Franklin Akins offered a similar perspective and urged future efforts to examine **which investments** are likely to lead to the most benefit for more Oregonians: "How much of our resources – time, money and talent – do we put into the criminal justice system to improve its response when the majority of victims don't access the criminal justice system? Is transforming that system so more people access it really the answer? When we think about anti-oppression and who is accessing that system right now, it's primarily white middle class survivors. For whom are we creating systems?"

Several other participants urged increased alignment and collaboration with **offense-specific systems**. In short, those who spoke to this issue argued that there is an important role for the Task Force in both fostering offense-related systems change and championing attitude changes about people who offend. In this regard, Cheryl O'Neill stated "We have to have a larger conversation. Demonizing people isn't a path to social change." Elaine Walters urged concerted efforts to nest restorative practices in the context of offender accountability:

There has been a lot of focus on accountability and compliance... What I don't know is whether healing and restorative practice has ever gotten a foothold, which I believe is critical to reducing sexual assault and reintegrating the people who have sexually offended. People that sexually offend need to be held accountable, certainly – which occurs with the registries and other responses. But, how do you ever get off of a registry? How do you ever deconstruct and re-

construct your sense of humanity so that you are not a sex offender anymore – once a sex offender, always a sex offender, really?

Brie Franklin Akins offered a similar perspective: “I think there needs to be an overall shift in perspective. So, someone commits a crime [and we think] they are a bad person. Yes, they made a choice. But what led them to that choice where maybe somebody else made a different choice? What are the norms, education, and the resources that are available to each person so that they could make a different choice?”

Moving forward, the partnerships that we’ve developed around primary prevention with the International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, the Oregon Adolescent Treatment Network, and other related spaces is interesting and promising.

– Meg Foster

Pre-K Through 12 Comprehensive Abuse Prevention Education and Child-Centric Systems Advocacy

Participants urged systematic and developmentally appropriate pre-K through high school **abuse prevention education** across Oregon. Several current Task Force members indicated that although the Task Force is a long-time partner with the Oregon Department of Education, “we have not historically had strong relationships with schools.” Looking ahead, one participant stated “Education is first. Comprehensive sex education – how to communicate, consent, healthy relationships – all of that.”

... help kids get a sense of themselves without needing to stand on top of somebody else.

– Nadia Telsey

Others urged the Task Force to lend its leadership, expertise and credibility toward a new educational norm – comprehensive prevention in Oregon’s schools covering all forms of abuse. Nicole Broder urged instructional strategies that integrate sexual health, violence prevention, and health disparities: “Sexual health and violence prevention are about holistic health and decreased health disparities. When these conversations are normalized – healthy sexuality, boundaries, consent – then we’ll see this [prevention impact] take off.”

Brie Franklin Akins remarked that this aim – comprehensive, effective and developmentally appropriate pre-K through 12 education – is far from common practice in Oregon and in states with which she is familiar: “If we can’t talk about healthy sexuality, how are we going to prevent sexual violence? There’s just still not even good curricula. You have to piecemeal things together.”

Michele Roland-Schwartz extended this discussion to **additional child-centered systems**, including **health care**:

Our goal is to build an understanding that the medical-forensic exam is more than just a kit. It is actually access to comprehensive health care services for survivors. We’re broadening this access to pediatric populations by investing in Forensic Nursing as an overall practice. This alone will be a huge shift; we’re investing in broadening Forensic Nursing practices across the state in order to reach more survivors – especially children.

Broader Public Engagement

We must have buy-in from people everywhere. It can't just be a few service providers; it must be an expanding partnership

– Nicole Broder

Many participants highlighted a need for broader and deeper **engagement, ownership, and clear and actionable pathways for abuse prevention** among members of the general public. This, they urged, is a vital next-step area of priority for the Task Force.

Sexual violence, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect all remain a public health crisis. We need to build a greater sense of collective responsibility and support communities to understand their responsibility and their role. It is a public health crisis when there is a significant threat to significant numbers.

– Nancy Greenman

Our neighbors, friends and communities have a huge role to play in allowing people to express the reality of their experiences – to be seen, supported and heard. We need to make it more concrete for people and give hope that what they do is impactful.

– Sybil Hebb

One pathway toward broader public engagement, as described by multiple Task Force advocates, included a call for intentional efforts to increase knowledge and awareness. One participant put it this way: We need to foster “greater public understanding of the myriad of impacts that violence can have on individuals, their families, and the ripple effects.”

Rape and other forms of violence are tools used in warfare... and in relationships. We need a better understanding of all the ways they are used to express and maintain power and control.

– Nadia Telsey

Many others also pointed to a priority for public engagement **norms change** campaigning, to continue to raise awareness of hopeful solutions, reducing stigma, and creating clear and broad avenues for **safe and productive child disclosure**: “Remove stigma so that people are able to come forward and get the help that they need when they need it.” As described by Sybil Hebb: “[We need to] create a situation that ensures kids have some way to speak confidentially – because they don’t understand what the landscape is, what the ramifications may be, and they don’t feel safe telling anybody. Kids need to have an opportunity to speak confidentially.”

If we adored our children, child abuse would end. If we, as a society, said we were crushed when harm comes to one child, think of how we would change.

– Nancy Greenman

Ongoing Primary Prevention Advocacy and Connections Between IPV, Sexual Violence, and Child Abuse and Neglect.

Many participants also emphasized an ongoing need to continue to elevate and promote the value and long-term benefits of primary prevention, including among key constituents and the general public – and called for increased and reliable prevention funding streams. Many also urged statewide collaboration and alignment and strategic planning between IPV, sexual violence, and child abuse and neglect sectors.

We need to sink way more dollars into prevention. Listening to advocates across the state in my current role and in working closely with our preventionists at the coalition, it's just so important.

– Renee Kim

As described by BB Beltran: “Prevention is the antidote The field has much information about prevention and its effectiveness, though there are few funds to actually implement those changes. Frustration is there, for sure, when we’re still not able to fund quality prevention programs.”

Meg Foster, among several others, urged “blending funding streams”:

[As it is now,] there’s a funding stream for child abuse prevention, a funding stream for domestic violence prevention, a funding stream for sexual violence prevention and we end up fostering an environment that competes for funding while not addressing the intersecting root causes; addressing sexual violence also addresses child abuse and neglect, and addresses youth suicide, etc. Why not make our resources more impactful; why not work together, even with funding?

Meg Foster reflected the sentiment of many when she mapped prevention funding to an ongoing need to change perceptions about what prevention entails:

I would love to shift how we’re funding prevention, including promoting a vision of doing training for funders. There is a need to shift what we’re calling prevention and help people understand a long-term vision for primary prevention – those longer term impacts, like reduction in child abuse, violence, and healthier and safer communities for all.

Finally, many others argued for a **statewide and integrated abuse prevention plan**, including investments in evidence-based prevention practices. As described by Elaine Walters, “[we need to] investigate and vet practices to build the evidence-base that prevention reduces incidence and vulnerabilities.” And Meg Foster urged revisiting a prevention plan that was previously developed in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority.

The prevention plan that was created towards the end of my tenure was really good. It provided a roadmap. But, what’s been done with that plan? Who sees it? Who buys into it? How much common knowledge is there about prevention?

– Nadia Telsey

Many Task Force advocates also urged deeper and strategic statewide alignment and collaboration **across the lifespan** and among **IPV, sexual violence, and child abuse and neglect prevention** efforts. Participants called for identifying shared

goals, sharing resources, and championed a “better together” core assumption. This widely urged recommendation has gained some traction, including with the Task Force’s Bridge Project.

The Bridge Project, created in partnership with The Ford Family Foundation, is designed to create and bolster connections between child abuse and other abuse prevention efforts throughout Oregon. We’re creating stronger networks and prevention opportunities across the lifespan.

– Nicole Cunningham

Sybil Hebb also urged collaboration among these prevention sectors and questioned the efficiency, viability, and effectiveness of siloed statewide efforts: “They’re not siloed issues, they’re connected,” she said. “We will all do our jobs better if we understand the larger landscape – and survivors will receive better services.”

Nicole Broder looked to the future:

I feel like we’ve embraced our potential, that we’re dreaming bigger, making more connections, and getting more ambitious about our offerings and our projects. Moving ahead, I see knowledge and understanding of sexual assault and how it overlaps with other issues like domestic violence and human trafficking is an area where more education is needed.

Prioritize Ongoing Anti-Oppression, Increase Anti-Racism Advocacy

In order for us to change we’ll have to heal cellular trauma. And we must focus our work on people disproportionately impacted.

– Mel Phillips

Participants strongly believed that the Task Force should continue its anti-oppression leadership and overwhelmingly called for **deeper and more targeted racial justice and anti-racism advocacy**. This included appeals for a) more diverse representation among Task Force membership, b) expanding ways of thinking about anti-oppression and more direct attention to anti-racism, and c) trauma healing. One participant stated that, to date, “we’ve only tiptoed” into these issues.

Megan Kovacs articulated the perspective of many participants:

We need to do deep racial justice and anti-racism work. It’s critically important. In Oregon, a huge part of the sexual violence movement is centered in white feminism. Yet, we know that people of color, Indigenous people, Black people, and trans women experience this – but they’re not centered in our work or our movement... There needs to be some deeply intentional work to atone for this. The work won’t move forward without those most impacted by barriers, those most marginalized because of white supremacy, racism, and institutional racism being directly involved. They’re not at the table, let alone being amplified and centered.

Who has not benefited? That’s who we need to invite to the table.

– Lisa Norton

Mel Phillips and others highlighted a need to **acknowledge Oregon's racist origins**. Many believed that the Task Force is very well positioned to leverage their credibility, leadership and statewide influence for this purpose. Mel Phillips said:

Dominant culture in Oregon can come together to look at the state's history. So many people deny it. They deny the history, no black folks, no selling your house to blacks... This dominant cultural ignorance prevents us from progressing. Once many more understand, more will see it. It's not up to black people to teach white people their history. There's a need for basic and truthful education. We are our history.

Michele Roland-Schwartz urged a similar next steps direction:

The women's movement was very centered on white women. I think policy work in Oregon has definitely been that, too. And it has to shift. It has to change. That's a huge piece to our work – focusing our policy work, training, and organizing on centering Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and LGBTQ community members' experiences.

Finally, BB Beltran, and a few additional participants, expressed concern about the **location of Task Force meetings**: "I would be remiss in my role as an advocate if I didn't say that the fact that the meetings are held at the police academy is inherently alienating to many. Holding our meetings there creates an unsafe space for people of color and people from other marginalized communities who do not have a great history with law enforcement."

It comes down to empowerment of populations. Changing the status of women, people of color, people with disabilities, sexual minorities, and other marginalized people is essential to decreasing sexual assault.

– Nadia Telsey

CONCLUSION

It [the 20-year retrospective interview] brought back joys, surprises, and realizations that we accomplished so much. And, it's just a thrill that they are still going strong. – Phyllis Barkhurst

Phyllis succinctly summarized the central motivation of the Task Force's formation in this way: "We agreed that across the state, and across disciplines, belief systems, and cultures, that adolescent and adult victims of non-stranger sexual assault had no access to justice. We wanted to provide access to justice for victims no matter where they lived in Oregon." Since the time of that initial and clear vision, sweeping Oregon-wide changes directly related to Task Force activities have occurred and remain underway.

Overwhelmingly, among all participants interviewed as a part of this retrospective – and in light of additional extensive document reviews – there was wide agreement that the Task Force has established itself as an innovative and bold leader, a highly-regarded convener, a model for statewide systems response renovation, skillful in legislative process and outcomes, and on the forefront of anti-oppression-centered primary prevention education. Participants attributed this success to multiple factors, though centering on 1) exceptional leadership, 2) organizational structure and process, and 3) Task Force culture.

Without exception, participants shared that their involvement with the Task Force was deeply personally meaningful, both at the level of direct support for survivors and a broader sense of participating in a cultural movement. As described by Kim Larson: "I wanted to be a part of a bigger picture and impact for all victims throughout the state. The Task Force creates that opportunity, including changing institutions." Steve Bellshaw put it this way: "It became more of a calling than a job."

It was a wonderful lesson – and for me as an emerging leader at that time – [to see leadership's] tenacity and to observe how to message things, how to keep moving forward in spite of opposition, and to be laser-focused on mission."

– Cynthia Stinson

This is also a tale of the power of leadership development. Many participants shared that their involvement with the Task Force, and in working alongside exceptional leaders and advocates, shaped the entire trajectory of their careers. BB Beltran, involved with the Task Force early in her career and now the Executive Director of Lane County's Sexual Assault Support Services, described it this way:

The Task Force helped give me words to experiences, a framework, and also a community which still influences me today. I owe a lot to the Task Force... Such valuable lessons for me as a young professional, learning how women could get along – because society pits us against each other. It was an incredible experience.

Many other Task Force members carried their experiences into related arenas across the U.S. and beyond. As described by Heather Huhtanen:

Now, in retrospect, it was such a huge learning curve for me. And, I have applied it in my international work. I spent five years working in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the judiciary and I worked on a whole variety of topics including domestic and sexual violence, implicit bias, and sexual and gender based harassment. I used so many of the things that I learned with the Task Force there – and in many international locations including Ukraine, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ghana, Zambia and others. It has been effective and very well received in every location. I use the same methodology, drawn from my early career work with the Task Force, all the time.

This 20-year retrospective shines light on a bold vision, perseverance, a prolonged commitment to anti-oppression values, and multiple challenges, successes, and victories. In that regard, this reflection by Megan Kovacs is telling:

I remember one meeting, in particular. I was chairing the Prevention Committee at the time, and it was the first meeting that we ever had with the Legislative and Public Policy committee. Our agenda was to talk about the role of policy in supporting dating and sexual violence prevention. So, we walked into the room and, literally – not a metaphor – there were not enough chairs at the table for us. The committee just didn't make room for us at the table. They weren't interested in our ideas. They only wanted to discuss how to punish perpetrators; they didn't want to take a step back and consider that a punitive view of sexual violence isn't helping anyone. Punishment is just what they were used to – there was no other strategy except to put people in prison. It was a really, really challenging environment to try to elevate a conversation about prevention.

So, fast forward to one of my last meetings with the Prevention and Education Committee, maybe two or three years ago. I walked into the main meeting hall. There were legislators there with the entire Public Policy Committee and the entire Prevention Committee. There were youth at the table; both committees had come together to celebrate the work that had been done with lawmakers. It was a really beautiful moment – one of those very few moments in life where you can actually see in real time the work that you put in.

Finally, participants looked ahead. All participants highlighted the Task Force's systems response accomplishments – and urged this work to continue. And, nearly all advocated for a deeper and more concentrated turn to primary prevention, anti-racism, and statewide collaboration with abuse prevention peers and peer systems (e.g., IPV, child abuse and neglect).

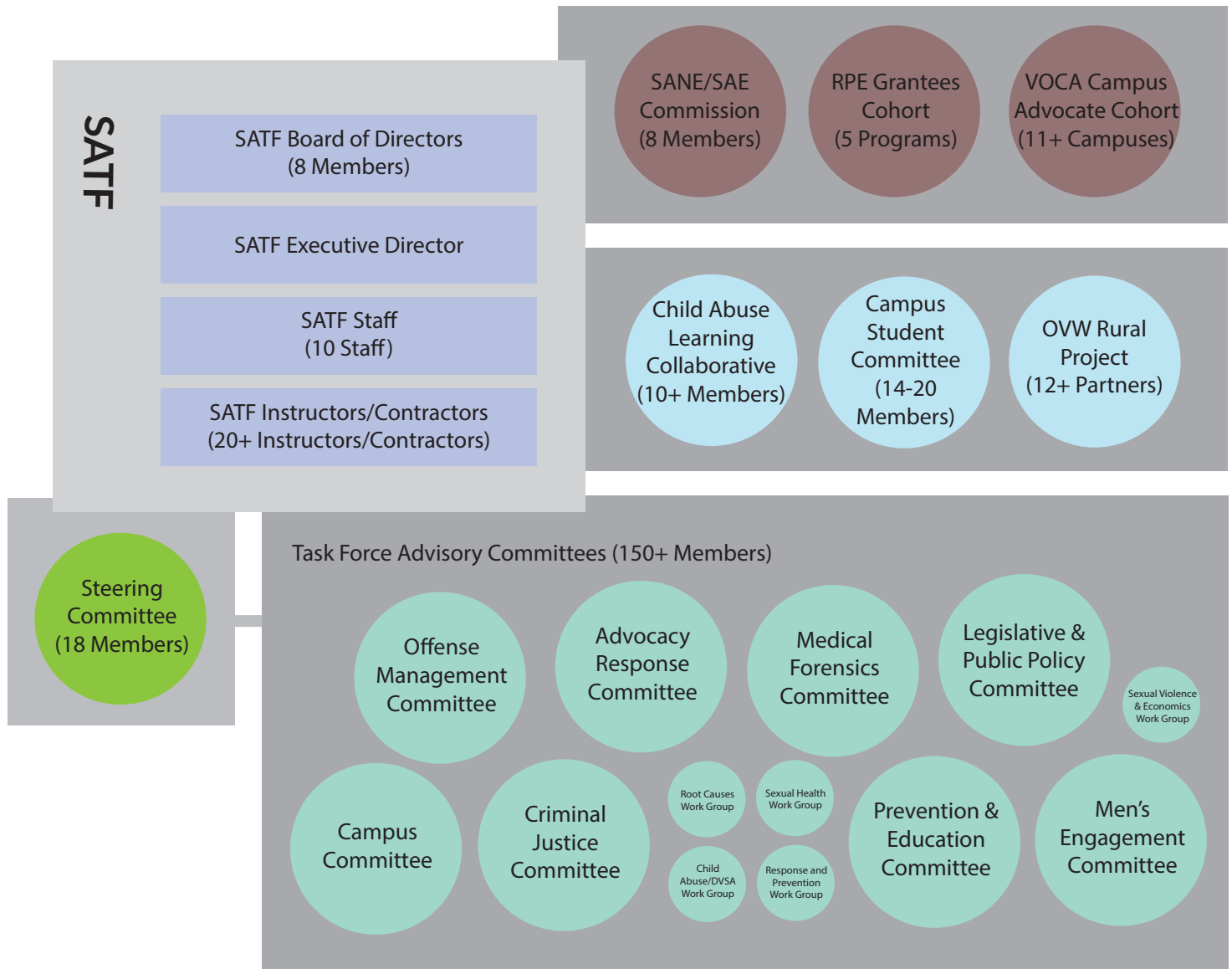
Michele Roland-Schwartz, reflecting on her own process, recalled her earlier years and the discomfort of being in the legislative "space:"

[The Capitol] and other dominant culture spaces are not easy to be in. I recall meeting our policy intern in the rotunda at the Capitol – we were waiting to meet with a legislator. I noticed she was looking at her attire - and I knew immediately what she was thinking. We had a conversation about impostor syndrome and checking the internal conversation; having confidence that you know what you're talking about and that you are enough. So, I just named it. She said, "Oh my gosh, yes! I was just looking down at my shoe laces and I thought that they looked ratty." That's what the space will do to you. That still happens to me when I'm in that space and other spaces like it. Growing up poor and from a working class background, I still have those "ratty shoelace" (self doubt) moments. But, in general, I feel more confident and comfortable in that space. It is a personal source of pride.

This personifies the Task Force's legacy – moving bravely into an unwelcoming space, and transforming it.



APPENDIX A: SATF ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANTS

With special thanks to all participants for your commitment to sexual violence prevention and response across Oregon.

Key Informant	Role	Years of Involvement with the Task Force
Kristy Alberty	SATF Membership & Communications Coordinator	2018-Present
Phyllis Barkhurst	Founding Member	1999-2007
Steve Bellshaw	Instructor & Steering Committee Member	2003-Present
BB Beltran	Instructor, Legislative & Public Policy Subcommittee (LPPC) Member	2004-Present
Nicole Broder	SANE Program Coordinator	2016-Present
Nicole Cunningham	Abuse Prevention Coordinator	2019-Present
Krista Evans	Rural Grant MOU Partner, Advocacy Response Subcommittee Member	2016-Present
Meg Foster	Prevention Program Coordinator	2015-Present
Brie Franklin Akins	Former Assistant Director & Prevention Program Coordinator	2005-2009
Erin Greenawald	Instructor, Former Domestic Violence Resource Prosecutor	2006-Present
Nancy Greenman	Former Prevention Program Coordinator	2002-2015
Sybil Hebb	Former LPPC Member	2003-2015
Heather Huhtanen	Founding Member	2002-2008
Erin Kevin	Steering Committee Member	2013-Present
Renee Kim	Founding Member	1999-2005
Megan Kovacs	LPPC Member, Former Co-Chair of Prevention & Education Subcommittee	2010-Present
Kim Larson	Instructor, LPPC Member	2005-Present
Warren Light	Steering Committee Member	2008-Present
Lisa Norton	Former Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and Instructor	1999-2021
Cheryl O'Neill	Advocacy Response Subcommittee Member	1999-Present
Mel Phillips	Steering Committee Member	2012-Present
May Pomegranate	Instructor, Medical Forensic Subcommittee Member	2019-Present
Michele Roland-Schwartz	Executive Director	2013-Present
Sarah Sabri	Current Domestic Violence Resource Prosecutor	2018-Present
Cynthia Stinson	Founding Member	2000-2013
Nadia Telsey	Instructor, Prevention & Education Subcommittee, plus additional roles	2002-2010
Elaine Walters	Former SANE Program Coordinator	2004-2007

*Note: Years of involvement encompass all forms of participation in the Task Force, including formal and informal involvement, employment, and volunteerism, if applicable. All dates under review.